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# Dividends: the value of public libraries in Canada

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## The authors

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## Abstract

Reports the findings of research conducted for the Library Action Committee of the Book and Periodical Council, Canada, into the importance of public libraries to library users, suppliers, publishers, retailers and other businesses; as well as to Canadian culture. Analyses the effects of reduced funding to public libraries on the economy and society at large.

## Editor's Introduction

The following document, *Dividends: The Value of Public Libraries in Canada*, was published in 1997 for the Library Action Committee of the (Canadian) Book and Periodical Council as a very nice booklet. I am pleased that the Book and Periodical Council, which holds the copyright, have allowed it be widely reprinted.

I decided to reprint it here in *The Bottom Line* because I think it is an excellent example of how we librarians can use indicators of the economic impact that our library services have on our communities to lobby successfully for increased funding. Furthermore, I think *Dividends* exemplifies an attempt at carrying forward – in the public arena – the type of research represented by two articles published in *The Bottom Line*, Vol. 9 No. 4, 1996: “A framework for evaluating public investment in urban libraries” by Glen E. Holt, Donald Elliott, and Christopher Dussold and “The economic and job creation benefits of Ontario public libraries” by Rod Sawyer.

In following up on my theme for this issue's editorial – sharing of information among librarians throughout the world to solve national problems – I thought readers throughout the world without access to *Dividends* would find it a useful model for adaptation. If we can demonstrate our worth with numbers, our budget numbers will be all the more justifiable. *Dividends* is chock full of evidence written in the language the public and public officials can relate to – and more importantly, that they can support.

## Background

The Library Action Committee of the Book and Periodical Council undertook a research project in July 1996 to review the importance of public libraries to library users, suppliers, publishers, retailers and other businesses, as well as to Canadian culture; to analyze the effects of reduced funding to public libraries on the economy and society at large; and to produce a discussion paper that outlined these themes and concerns.

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- Young Canada Works in Heritage Institutions Program, through the Canadian Library Association
- Association of Canadian Publishers
- Canadian Publishers' Council
- Canadian library wholesalers
- Council of Administrators of Large Urban Public Libraries
- Administrators of Medium Sized Public Libraries of Ontario
- Ontario Wholesalers, Librarians and Publishers Action Group
- Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto
- National Library of Canada

Jody Warner, MLS, was hired to research and prepare a discussion paper which was then turned over to the supervising task group members (drawn from the Library Action Committee) for editing. The task group consisted of Eric Hicks, wholesaler; Jane Watkins and Leslie Fitch, Canadian Library Association, and Nancy Fleming, Book and Periodical Council.

The task group would like to express their appreciation to everyone who helped to bring this document to fruition, especially Rosemary Tanner and Barbara Sale Schon. We are grateful to Webcorn Limited for printing and binding this document at no charge.

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Limited copies of this document are available from the Book and Periodical Council and online on the Canadian Library Association's Website, <http://www.cla.amlibs.ca>

## Introduction

When you ask Canadians what the public library means to them, you get an astonishing variety of answers. For some it is the place to find essential career or job search information; or the place that welcomes literacy learners and tutors; or the place to find information for homework assignments or about pressing legal, medical or financial needs; or the place for

children to start their lifelong learning association with the library, or to connect to the Internet, or to find books to borrow and enjoy.

Frequently overlooked, however, in the consideration of the "value" of a public library are the economic benefits it provides to its own community; to the businesses that supply services to the library; to the retailers, wholesalers and publishers who sell to libraries; and to the national economy by the active promotion and support given to literacy and literacy-based programs, and indeed, to Canadian culture.

This document is intended to serve as a nation-wide reference tool for those advocating and planning for the continuation of strong library services, including library managers and staff, for library boards and town councils, for publishers and retailers and for provincial and national government officials. It outlines the many areas in which public libraries play a vital role in Canada, and also notes where reductions in library funding will be detrimental to suppliers, publishers, retailers, local businesses and governments, and thus to all Canadians.

The acquisition and delivery of public library services contribute profound social and economic dividends. These dividends are not limited to library users; nor to the businesses, industries, trades and professions that supply libraries; nor are the benefits limited to the local economy, the national cultural industry, sector, or to Canadian culture and our democratic society; nor to literacy, children, students and lifelong learners. Each of these community of interests is served by Canadian public libraries. In order to continue to do so, stable funding is required.

## Overview

### Canada and the public library

Public libraries play a vital role in the lives of Canadians and are extensively used from coast to coast. Research shows that people who make use of the library tend to do so regularly. For many Canadians the public library is part of the integral fabric of their everyday lives. With the increasing importance of information, the public library has an increasingly important role to play.

**Public libraries and their critical financial situation**

Fiscal restraint, restructuring and identifying efficiencies of operations are hallmarks of the 1990s. Public libraries have been a part of this societal shift, and budget reductions are now being felt in a number of areas: reduced materials expenditure, reduced staffing levels and reduced service hours, at the same time that inflation and the costs of new technologies are pressuring existing budgets.

**Public libraries are cost-effective information providers**

Public libraries provide a wealth of information resources services in a timely and cost-effective manner, save businesses and people time and money, and help to contribute to better decision making, owing to their highly trained staff and organized methods of information storage and retrieval.

**The value of information**

The increasing value of information is recognized world-wide and information is vital to the success of organizations and businesses. Public libraries are well positioned to make information available and accessible in many formats to the broadest possible community in a timely fashion.

**Public libraries support the local economy**

Public libraries bolster the economic prosperity of their communities, they contribute to the economic wellbeing of the businesses that surround them, they improve the market worth of their communities, they support their local economies, they benefit local businesses, and they offer Canadians highly skilled and often highly technical jobs in an automated environment.

**Public libraries support the cultural industry sector**

Public libraries are a critical link in the book and periodical trade as they buy print materials to a level that ensures that the book trade in Canada remains healthy. Other cultural industries including producers and distributors of music, computer products and videos concur. Public libraries are a vital link in supporting the

creation, production and dissemination of print, audio-visual and electronic materials in Canada.

**Public libraries support Canadian culture**

Public libraries are an indispensable part of the cultural fabric. Libraries not only purchase material written, illustrated, designed, performed and sold by Canadians but also make this culture available to the broadest possible spectrum of Canadians. The existence of public libraries helps to ensure that Canadian culture continues to flourish and thrive.

**Public libraries support a democratic society**

A citizen's access to information is an essential component of a smooth democratic process. The access to information that public libraries offer to Canadians regardless of race, income, class, age or gender, assists in supporting and encouraging democracy.

**Public libraries support and promote literacy**

An informed and literate population is essential to Canada's economic strength and yet Canada's literacy rate is troubling. The cost to the Canadian economy of low-level literacy skills is more than 10 billion dollars annually. Public libraries play an active role in national efforts to increase the literacy skills of Canadians.

**Public libraries support children and students**

The formal education system in Canada and the informal lifelong learning resources of public libraries work together to support children and students. Canadians believe that the public library's role in educating children and students should be a top priority. Investment in public libraries yields a high return to the educational health of students. Studies from around the world show that public library use is a positive factor in the attainment of high reading and comprehension levels. Well-educated students guarantee that Canada will be economically competitive into the next century.

**Public libraries support lifelong learning**

Public libraries are a lifelong learning resource for all Canadians. People need to be informed,

to make informed personal decisions, and to constantly upgrade their work and life skills. Canadians recognize and value the role of libraries in the lifelong learning process. Canadians must have the necessary job skills for Canada to remain competitive in the twenty-first century economy, and public libraries will help people gain these skills.

### Public libraries and emerging technologies

The public library has a key role in ensuring the accessibility of the Information Highway to all Canadians by guaranteeing all users access to sophisticated computer technology, especially those without access to a computer or the Internet at home, school or work. Canadians are sending clear signals to decision makers that they want the public library to be involved in providing electronic resources, including the Internet.

### Canada and the public library

Public libraries play a vital role in the lives of Canadians, and are extensively used by Canadians from coast to coast:

- 34 percent of Canadians over 15 visited the library at least once in the past year. This number exceeds the 31 percent who attended a professional sporting event and the 30 percent who attended a concert or performance (*Statistics Canada*, 1995a, p. 17)
- in 1995, Ontario residents visited their libraries 71,929,270 times (*Cultural Partnerships Branch*, 1996, p. 3)
- researchers working in Nepean, Ontario concluded that “the results from the present survey show that a higher percentage of Nepean residents go to a library (69 percent) than to a movie (65 percent), a concert (55 percent), or a gallery (43 percent)” (*Ekos Research Associates*, 1990, pp. 18, 23)
- “public libraries have a high volume of use and attract more users than almost any other cultural/education agency” (*Nova Scotia Regional Libraries Funding Formula Review Committee*, 1993, p. 36)
- librarians in large urban public library systems, of which there are more than 35 in Canada, answer well over 16 million questions each year (CALUPL, 1996, p. 3 (see Table I)). Librarians in smaller centres also

answered millions of questions. Questions come from Canadians of every age, background and interest level and are on every conceivable subject including:

- Can you tell me how to contact my MP or MPP?
- What is the best kind of washing-machine to buy?
- I need something to explain cancer to a toddler.
- I’m applying for a job and I need information about XYZ company.
- Do you have Margaret Atwood’s latest book?
- How can I contact the nearest Alzheimer support group?
- Do turtles have knees?
- I need a detailed drawing of the Bluenose to make a scale model.
- Who invented Kleenex?
- What are my legal rights if my tenant refuses to pay rent?
- Where can I take a course in landscape architecture?
- large urban public libraries in Canada circulated 116,895,861 items in 1995 – “that’s 4.5 times the population of Canada”
- public libraries planned and delivered thousands of programs (in 1995, 77,415 in large urban public libraries) which were attended by millions. Program topics included:
  - Positioning yourself for the job market
  - Author presentations/book talks
  - Pre-school story time
  - Introduction to the Internet
  - Personal financial planning
  - How to street-proof your child
  - Health issues: i.e. high blood pressure
  - Summer reading clubs
  - Designing a Christmas wreath
  - How to establish a perennial garden.

### Libraries enhance the lives of Canadians

- a Communications Canada survey demonstrated that Canadians spend on average 4.4 hours per week reading for pleasure (Freve, 1993, p. 1)
- at Lloydminster Public Library, 33 percent of patrons felt the most important role of the library was as a centre of recreational reading (Lloydminster Public Library, 1994, p. intro)

Table I Use of public libraries by Canadians

Library	Annual circulation	Attendance at programs held	Number of information questions
Calgary Public Library	10,097,613	45,511	2,375,954
Vancouver Public Library	7,506,994	105,115	1,333,922
Bibliothèque de Ville de Laval	1,971,287	51,654	97,968
Winnipeg Public Library	5,696,106	68,435	390,249
Halifax City Public Library	1,412,528	128,914	176,776
London Public Library	3,920,363	163,444	639,308
Saskatoon Public Library	3,366,978	65,550	321,434

Note: Table created based on figures from *CALUPL Annual Statistics* 1995, p. 3 (CALUPL, 1996)

- at North York Public Library, 63 percent of patrons use the library for pleasure reading (North York Public Library, 1995, p. 26)
- at Milton Public Library, 84% of patrons use the library for recreational reading (Cresap and Barnard, 1988, p. D4).

### Canadians use the public library regularly

Research shows that people who make use of the library tend to do so regularly. For many Canadians the public library is part of the fabric of their everyday lives:

- a majority of patrons use the library “at least once a week” (North York Public Library, 1995, p. 23)
- “44 percent are heavy users ... 52 percent visit libraries once a month ... only 5 percent are light users.” (Fraser Valley Regional Library Strategic Plan, 1995, p. 4)
- 58.4 percent of patrons in Lloydminster use the library at least once a month. (Lloydminster Public Library, 1994, p. intro).

In poll after poll Canadians demonstrate the importance of the public library:

- in Alberta, research shows that nearly nine out of ten Albertans regard the library as an “essential service, vital to the community” (Calder Bateman Communications Ltd, 1991, p. 26)
- “96 percent of the public regard the public library as either very or somewhat useful to the community” (Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995, p. 3)
- Nova Scotians “view public libraries as an essential service ... slightly over three-quarters rated the public library as essential ... (while only) ... 1 percent viewed these

services as non-essential” (Omnifacts Research Ltd, 1996, p. ii).

The public library has a meaningful role to play as the Information Age continues to challenge us. Now more than ever Canadians need information for success at work, at school and at home. Libraries can help to find answers to many questions: where to live, how to plan and get a job (from job skills to résumés and the job interview process), what to buy (and not to buy), where to travel, what university or college to attend, and where to find up-to-date health or legal information. Given the increasing importance of information, the last few decades have witnessed demonstrable, sometimes dramatic, increases in public library use:

- over the past 15 years the number of readers in Canada increased 20 percentage points. Yet Canadians find themselves with less discretionary income, and thus bought 33 percent fewer books today than they did in 1978. Research shows that in an economic downturn such as this, people turn to libraries to fulfil their informational needs. This is corroborated by the fact that in the same 15 years “public libraries reported an increase of 53 percent in their loans” (Freve, 1993, pp. 1/2)
- an Ontario study found that the public library was “the most popular place for obtaining books (41 percent)” (Goss, Gilroy & Associates, 1990, p. 35)
- research in Alberta revealed that 50.7 percent of those surveyed say their main source of reading material is borrowing from a library (Lloydminster Public Library, 1994, p. 8).

While the question of funding of public libraries is a challenging one, given the current fiscal environment, reflecting on this issue is important “precisely because it raises vital questions about the type of society in which we wish to live. What is considered essential to the life of the nation? What is valued by its citizens?” (Boucher, 1995, p. 16).

For millions of Canadians, the answer is public libraries.

### Public libraries and their critical financial situation

Fiscal restraint, restructuring, and implementing efficiencies of operations are hallmarks of the 1990s. In this environment all public sectors of society are spending less money, including public libraries.

In Canada, public libraries have been downsizing and budgets have been cut significantly:

- Statistics Canada reports that “although current dollar expenditures continue to show some modest growth, in constant price terms expenditure peaked in 1989-1990 and has been slowly declining each year since” (Culture Statistics: Government Expenditure on Culture, 1994, p. 8)
- at the Winnipeg Public Library, “The total Libraries Department budget has declined from \$13.2 million in 1992 to \$12.7 million in 1995” (Winnipeg Public Library, 1996, p. 26)
- after taking inflation into account, Metro Toronto, Richmond, B.C.; Edmonton, Victoria, Winnipeg, and East York are all receiving less revenue per capita from municipal governments than they did in 1981. Laval, Markham, Nepean, Oakville, St John’s, Vaughan, and Gloucester meanwhile have received no increase over 1981 municipal funding rates (CALUPL ranking tables, 1993, p. 23)
- a look at the budgets of the 38 CALUPL libraries reveals that 34 of them are receiving less revenue from provincial governments than they did in 1981 (CALUPL ranking tables, 1993, p. 23-24).

Budget reductions have been felt in a number of areas.

### Reductions in materials expenditure budget

- the Halifax City Regional Library had its book budget cut to \$534,100; it was \$808,500 in 1990 (*Quill and Quire*, October 1992, p. 14)
- the Toronto Public Library system lost 30 percent of its materials expenditure budget in 1992. This has led to a situation where “in the old days 20 copies of a new title would go into 20 different branches; now one or two copies do the job for the whole city ... Our browsing function is being eroded” (Govier, 1995, p. A27)

Similar budget cuts have been experienced across the country, and continue to this day. This has a profoundly negative impact on many retail sectors, especially on the publishing industry:

- “the inability of libraries to purchase materials in Canada will ultimately put some Canadian publishing companies out of business” (Canadian Publishers’ Council, 1996, p. 1)
- This is echoed by booksellers from around the world, who record that “Under-funding of schools and libraries ... leading to a decline of school and library business” is a serious problem (Graham, 1994, p. 212).

Acquisitions are not limited to books; thus there is a parallel effect felt by retail sectors which sell magazines, CD-ROMs, videos, computer software, talking books and audio cassettes to public libraries.

The reality of reduced library expenditures results in fewer books purchased, fewer periodical subscriptions and reduced audio-visual and electronic collections in communities across the country. This jeopardizes the quality of service public libraries can offer and has serious economic repercussions for Canada’s cultural industries.

### Reductions in staffing levels

- the Metro Toronto Reference Library “is working with almost 25 percent fewer employees than in 1992” (Boyle, 1995, p. A)
- at the Winnipeg Public Library, “staff has shrunk from 495 to 368 since 1990” (Martin, 1995, p. A11)

Budget reductions that result in staff layoffs have continued since the publication of these statistics. The cutbacks are detrimental to the maintenance of high quality service in public libraries since the expertise of staff, particularly professional librarians, is key to good library service, from the selection of library materials to assisting the public in the use of the library:

- “Because of experience and educational background, library staff have the skills needed to assist the public to access information including access through technology” (Cultural Partnership Branch, 1996, p. 26)
- 22.6 percent of all visits to the library included “asking a librarian to help in finding information” (Griffiths and King, 1994, p. 94)
- in Nova Scotia, “The importance of library staff is demonstrated in that current library users made high use of library staff for assistance in finding information (76 percent of all current users). Moreover, they were very satisfied with the services they received, supplying a mean score of 4.7 on the five-point satisfaction scale” (Omnifacts, 1996, p. iv).

While automation and technology have provided opportunities for more efficient and streamlined workplaces, there is a concern that continued erosion in the number of employed professional librarians and other library staff owing to continued downsizing brought about by budget reductions will be detrimental to the success of users finding needed information.

### Reductions of service hours

- in St John, New Brunswick, “library hours were cut back 13 hours per week, per branch, this year” (Quill and Quire, October 1992, p. 14)
- in 1990, the Winnipeg Public Library “reduced its hours, closing 15 neighbourhood and community branches all day Wednesday” (Winnipeg Public Library, 1996, p. 22).

Reducing the hours that libraries are open limits the access that Canadians have to the information which public libraries collect and disseminate, and the services they provide.

A look at the context in which cuts to public libraries are occurring presents an alarming

picture. Canadian public libraries are facing increased demands in conjunction with diminishing budgets.

### Inflation of materials costs and new technology costs

While inflation in Canada has been relatively low in recent years, libraries have experienced increased costs. As the cost of paper increased, so too did the costs to libraries. At the same time, the high costs of implementing and maintaining new technologies provide further challenges to the provision of public library service in the 1990s:

- study of the costs of periodical titles commonly found in Canadian libraries revealed that “Whereas the year-over-year increase in the Consumer Price index is only 1.3 percent ... the percentage increase in the Periodical Price index is 10.5, being 8.1 times the 1994 annual rate of inflation” (Davies *et al.*, 1994, p. 11).

When the federal government announced that the GST on print materials would be reimbursed to libraries, effective October 23, 1996, library managers were greatly relieved, as the imposition of the tax in 1992 immediately reduced the buying power of libraries across the country:

- the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax on reading materials drove prices up and consequently “harmed our publishers, bookstores, libraries, students and writers” (Don’t Tax Reading Coalition, 1995).

Incorporating the costs of technology into already strained operating/capital budgets is a reality faced by libraries across the country:

- many journal articles record the fact that “Libraries face a new budgetary challenge: how to finance the critical need to link their communities with a proliferating electronic world” (St Lifer *et al.*, 1996, p. 40)
- large urban public libraries in Canada spent well over \$1 million on electronic materials in 1995 (CALUPL, 1996, p. 8).

The combination of limited funding, increased service demands, and higher materials and technology costs places public libraries in a precarious situation.

The reduction of a library's budget has an impact more profound than a simple decrease in the number of items acquired at that library. Budget reductions affect publishers and vendors, library users, staffing and service levels, service hours and the quality of library collections, and compromise the necessity to add new technologies. At a time when more Canadians than ever need and use public library services, budget cuts threaten the staff and services that users require for success in their day-to-day lives.

### **Public libraries are cost-effective information providers**

Public libraries provide a wealth of information resources and services in a timely and cost-effective manner and so save people time and money and help to contribute to better decision making. Information is an increasingly valuable tool, yet Canadians have less discretionary income to spend on information resources. Therefore, public libraries are well positioned to play an active and important role in the ever-developing information era.

- "if time is money, then librarians can provide a direct benefit to the user by saving time. The well-trained reference librarian can usually locate usable information more accurately and quickly than the library user" (Ellis, 1994, p. 54)
- of the people visiting the library for work-related information, "40 percent saved time or money; 25 percent resulted in performing work better; and 18 percent resulted in completing work faster" (Griffiths and King, 1994, p. 86, 87)
- "due to their organized methods of identifying, locating, and retrieving information, libraries save users millions of dollars each year in time not wasted attempting to recreate data already available, time saved in not duplicating work already done, and time not wasted on erroneous work" (Kraushaar, 1990, p. 167)
- Public libraries are an effective vehicle for ensuring that Canadians have the information they need to make wise decisions leading to economic success.
- "Libraries serve as a cost-efficient and convenient access route to accurate, in-depth information" (Canadian Publishers' Council 1996, p. 1).

### **The value of information**

Governments, economists and social scientists all recognize the increasing value of information on the world stage:

- "Knowledge-based industries are growing faster than any other sector of the Canadian economy" (Industry Canada, 1996, p. 1)
- "The emerging global economy is characterized by greatly increased flows of information and financial capital" (Statistics Canada, 1996, p. 9)
- the significance of information is reflected in the shifting labour force. "It is estimated that by the end of this century something like two-thirds of all work will be information work" (Kemp, 1992, p. 3).

Information is vital to the success of organizations and businesses, workers and supervisors, employers and the employed, and those looking for work:

- "the community's economy benefits when business people use library resources to make wise business decisions, employees use them to improve their job skills, or the disadvantaged use them to help break the cycle of poverty" (Godwin, 1991, p. 53).

The acquisition of information is not an easy process. Public libraries are well positioned to make information (in many formats) available and accessible to the broadest possible community, and do so in a timely fashion:

- Information is an elusive commodity, and few people "are accustomed to thinking in terms of what they gain from library or information use, in terms of time saved or mistakes avoided, increased knowledge, better decisions taken, and so on" (Oppenheim, 1986, p. 25)
- "as we prepare to enter the twenty-first century, libraries have a major role in providing the information vital to the productivity and economic growth of ... the nation" (Kraushaar, 1990, p. 168).

### **Public libraries support the local economy**

There has been mounting evidence that public libraries bolster the local economic prosperity of the communities they serve.



## Public libraries contribute to the economic wellbeing of local businesses

Research shows that public libraries increase the potential profits of nearby businesses, which in turn increases the economic success of the local community:

- a report on public libraries in Nova Scotia states that “increased library traffic directly benefits area businesses. Studies have shown that people using public libraries also tend to include shopping with visits to the library” (Nova Scotia Regional Libraries Funding Formula Review Committee, 1993, p. 36)
- when Hamilton Public Library studied the effects of the imposition of a non-resident user fee, research showed that the Central Library experienced 71,916 fewer annual visits (1995 over 1993), at a time when residential use was increasing. “It was the consensus feeling of the Central Library Services Review Steering Committee that the introduction of non-resident fees has caused the number of regional borrowers to diminish, to the detriment of the downtown core ... It would appear that the parking authority alone loses more revenue than we generate from non-resident fees” (Roberts, 1996, p. 1/2)
- research in BC showed that over 75 percent of library patrons regularly combined trips to the library with the purchase of goods and services (\$500-\$600 annually) from retail stores close to the library. “... the total value of economic activity generated by a library location could be measured ... The annual ‘direct economic activity’ for Guildford was \$20 million, for Newton \$10.8 million, for Ocean Park \$5.7 million and for Whalley \$9.9 million” (Surrey Public Library, 1994, p. intro)
- in the UK, library users were asked if their library visits were combined with other reasons for being in the area. The number one answer was “shopping” with 51 percent of people giving this response (Cheshire County Council, 1985, Table 3.6)
- an American researcher noted that “the library is complementary to other businesses in the complex, and the use of all businesses is very likely to increase because of the presence of the library” (Anderson, 1994, p. 396).

## Public libraries improve the market worth of a community

Evidence has been mounting that “a thriving cultural scene creates an atmosphere that is conducive to business; the arts, cultural events and institutions attract people and their disposable incomes and generally make for safer, more vibrant cities” (Boucher, 1995, p. 12):

- an Ontario report notes that “By helping to attract new businesses and residents, modern library facilities can have a direct impact on increased tax-dollars and local economic renewal ... since 1990, analysis conducted on site selection factors for new or relocated businesses showed that quality of life, including good schools and cultural and recreational facilities (i.e. libraries), ranked as the most important factor” (Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995, p. 8)
- research in the USA confirms that public libraries increase the economic value of a community by “their capacity to draw businesses, home buyers, tourists, and others to the zone” (Cooper and Crouch, 1994, p.233)
- in California, “county officials found that studies in a number of communities nationwide indicated libraries, if maintained and administered well, increased property values in the community served. The American Association of Certified Appraisers even states that appraisers look to see if a community has a local library when assessing property values” (Cooper and Crouch, 1994, p. 232).

Public libraries offer learning opportunities in a neighborhood, which stimulate the positive growth of people and reduce the risk of crime, drug abuse and other undesirable and expensive problems.

## Public libraries invest in the economy

Public libraries contribute to the economy via their annual operating budgets and capital projects.

- in Ontario “34.2 billion dollars is generated annually by the information technology sector. The amount of money spent by libraries (approximately 20 percent of their budgets) on automation-related areas supports Ontario-based automation companies”

(Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995, p. 10)

- “library capital projects include new buildings, expansions, renovations, access projects ... heritage building preservation work, as well as heating and air-conditioning renovations and installations, and renovations associated with building conversions. These labour-intensive projects can provide needed local short-to-medium construction jobs” (Cultural Partnership Branch, 1996, p. 1)
- Service de la bibliothèque de Ville de Laval spent \$1,821,196 on building and maintenance expenditures in 1992 (CALUPL, 1993, p. 193)
- Saskatoon Public Library spent \$780,561 on building and maintenance expenditures in 1992 (CALUPL, 1993, p. 431)
- Halifax City Regional Library spent \$4,782,363 on building and maintenance expenditures in 1992 (CALUPL, 1993, p. 142)
- Public libraries in Ontario and British Columbia together spent over tens of millions of dollars on library, building and office supplies (British Columbia Public Library Statistics 1995; Ontario Public Library Statistics, 1995)

Public libraries support the Canadian economy. Their participation in the economy increases tax revenue and employment. “... the arts and culture sector contributes to the wellbeing of a variety of businesses through the purchase of goods and services” (Statistics Canada, 1986, p. 9).

### Public libraries benefit local businesses

Businesses need information. Many small and larger businesses cannot afford to keep the information they require in-house and so are turning increasingly to the public library for their information needs. In this way, public libraries contribute to the economy by offering information resources and services to local businesses and organizations:

- “Businesses can go to their local library to access business addresses and contact names, product information, laws, and information on taxes, investment and loan opportunities, up-to-date business articles, business

operations, strategy and management items, import/export data, customs procedures and opportunities, marketing strategy, government information and gather information on competitors” (Cultural Partnership Branch, October 1996, 2nd ed., p. 5)

- “public libraries are used an average of 6.9 times per year by professionals for work-related purposes” (Griffiths and King, 1994, p. 86)
- at the North York Public Library a recent survey demonstrated that “almost two-thirds of businesses surveyed use libraries to obtain required information, about one-third frequently and one-third occasionally” (North York Public Library, 1995, p. 44)
- a survey of community health organization directors in Ontario were asked to rate 12 information provider options according to frequency of use. The public library was rated at the top (Smythe *et al.*, 1994, p. 34, Table 11).

Public libraries provide relevant and useful services for both the private and the public sector. When libraries provide information services to local companies and individuals, the money and time saved by these businesses and workers can be invested elsewhere.

- “the investment of these resources in turn contributes to strengthening the local economy. Therefore, the saving to corporate and individual library users of not having to buy their information elsewhere becomes a meaningful measure of economic impact” (Ellis, 1994, p. 8).

### Public libraries provide high-skill and high-tech jobs

Public libraries provide jobs for thousands of Canadians. The jobs provided in many libraries are those that are critical to the success of our changing economy, with staff that is familiar with an automated workplace, skilled (in a customer-driven market) in customer service, and highly trained on the most current technologies and applications.

Each of these employees contributes to the Canadian economy by paying taxes and purchasing goods and services. In Ontario, staff salaries in libraries totalled \$237,383,818 in

1994 (Ontario Public Library Statistics, 1994), money that is then fed into local economies to pay taxes, mortgages, tuition, buy cars and clothes, go to movies and restaurants, and the like.

### **Public libraries support the cultural industry sector**

Public libraries support Canada's cultural industry sector. Nothing demonstrates the success of the relationship between public libraries and the retail sector (including businesses selling books, music, magazines, computer products and videos) better than the link between libraries and the book trade. According to a position paper written by the Canadian Publishers' Council, public libraries are a critical link to a successful book trade in Canada:

- in Ontario alone "libraries spend \$40 million annually in the publishing industry" (Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995, p. 21)
- "Publishers rely heavily on the revenue from library sales to allow them the ability to reinvest and continue to publish, in some cases previously unknown writers. The public library market more often than not determines the future of many authors" (Canadian Publishers' Council, 1996, p. 2)
- "The publishing sector is extremely sensitive to these funding cuts (to libraries) as they will negatively impact the very future of Canadian authors/creators, freelance editors, literary agents, publisher and related human resources, printer and graphic artists ... The Canadian publishing industry provides employment both directly and indirectly to more than 70,000 people. The reduction in library spending and, in turn, the inability of publishers to reinvest in Canadian programs, will absolutely mean the demise of some publishing houses" (Canadian Publishers' Council, 1996, pp. 3/4)
- when the health of public libraries is threatened, "Canada's cultural industry sector, which is defined as newspaper, periodical and book publishing, recording, radio, television and theatrical film is in serious jeopardy" (Canadian Publishers' Council, 1996, p. 5).

Public libraries buy a significant amount of print materials, which helps to ensure that the book trade in Canada remains thriving and healthy. The following figures reflect the importance of public library markets:

- in 1995, Canada's large urban public libraries spent in excess of \$48.5 million dollars on print and non-print materials: Close to \$30 million of it was spent at Canadian wholesalers, publishers, booksellers, distributors and retailers (CALUPL, 1996, p. intro).

There are over 4,000 other libraries across the country whose budgets also support the Canadian book and periodical industries.

Public libraries represent an important customer base for Canadian booksellers. Discussions with representatives from the Canadian Magazine Publishers Association indicate that the link between public libraries and the periodical industry in Canada is equally vital. Other cultural industries, including those involved in the production and distribution of music, computer products, and videos echo this opinion.

Public libraries are a vital link in supporting those individuals and institutions involved in the creation, production, and dissemination of print, audio-visual, and electronic materials.

### **Public libraries support Canadian culture**

Statistics Canada defines our national culture as a "mirror which reflects the lives, histories and identities of Canadians" (Statistics Canada, 1995, p. 32). Public libraries are an indispensable part of the cultural fabric, since libraries not only purchase items written, illustrated, designed and performed (and sold) by Canadians, but also make this culture available to the broadest possible spectrum of Canadians:

- 83 percent of the \$47,467,873 in the 1994 materials budget of Canada's large urban public libraries was spent on purchasing print materials (CALUPL, 1995)
- 82 percent of Canadians live in mixed ethno-cultural neighbourhoods. Public libraries are responding to this reality by making it a priority to offer "varied book collections and programs for a diverse clientele" (Godin, 1994, p. 2)

- one researcher compiled a list of 100 Canadian novels and checked for their availability and ease of access in a number of different types of bookstores and in three public libraries. He concluded that public libraries “are clearly the most effective agency in Canada in providing a wide range of materials” (Hopkins, 1987, p. 87)
- in the Northwest Territories, public libraries are at the forefront of “preserving Inuktitut as a living language” (McMahon and Fiscus, 1992, p. 953) because they collect materials in syllabics, the alphabet of the Inuit.

Those involved in the production of Canadian arts and culture face many challenges, including a small domestic market in which to sell their work, and competition stemming from substantial cultural importation from the USA. The Canadian Department of Communications noted that “Most of the off-stage cultural fare that Canadians consume comes from somewhere else. Seventy-six percent of books sold in Canada are imported, 97 percent of theatrical screen time goes to imported films ... over 90 percent of dramatic television presentations are non-Canadian in origin” (Canada, Department of Communications, 1987, p. 11).

Public libraries that collect Canadiana and promote it through programs such as author talks and other programs are critically important to the Canadian arts and cultural production process:

- “There is a vital need in Canada to ensure that the burgeoning cultural development in the creative sense be marked by the development of healthy instruments of communication (e.g. public libraries). Without them creativity could still take place but fewer Canadians would have access to these creations” (Canada, Department of Communications, 1987, p. 77)
- “The health of the literary community is inextricably linked to the health of public library systems.” Cuts to public libraries mean “... restricted publishing programs will result in employee layoffs. Canadians will not be the ones to record our history, write poetry and literature and produce materials to educate our children” (Canadian Publishers’ Council, 1996, pp. 1 and 5)

The existence of public libraries helps to ensure that Canadian culture continues to flourish and thrive. Indeed, the value of funding public libraries and other cultural and artistic enterprises is “linked to the project of creating a national identity and fostering a greater sense of national unity” (Boucher, 1995, p. 1).

### Public libraries support a democratic society

The access to information that public libraries offer to Canadians, regardless of race, class, income, age or gender, assists in supporting and encouraging democracy and improves the quality of citizens’ lives:

- in measuring the development of countries, the United Nations noted as positive the fact that industrialized nations have on average “more than five library books” for every person (United Nations, 1995, p. 17)

A citizen’s access to information is an essential component of an effective democratic process:

- “Democracies vest supreme power in the people. Libraries make democracy work by providing access to information so that citizens can make the decisions necessary to govern themselves” (American Libraries, 1995)
- Canadian public libraries help to ensure that those living in rural communities are not isolated from information resources. In 1994, British Columbia Library Services mailed 11,544 books to individuals who had no local library service (British Columbia Public Library Statistics, 1995).

Furthermore, public libraries are the primary site to locate information about and produced by the various levels of government. Governments, in turn, depend on libraries to collect and disseminate government information. As governments are increasingly making information available in electronic format only, it becomes even more important for libraries to provide electronic access to their users free of charge, so all members of the community, regardless of income bracket, will be able to find needed government information:

- Canadian public libraries are the major distribution channel of government documents to the public. Through the Depository

Services Program, libraries receive government information. "By using the infrastructure of the library community to provide access, the federal government guarantees long-term and wide-spread availability of information gathered ... the partnership provides government with an efficient conduit to promote itself, its role and its programs" (Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1990, p.3).

### Public libraries support and promote literacy

The existence of an informed and literate population is essential to Canada's economic strength as we enter the twenty-first century. An illiterate and uninformed workforce cannot meet the needs of workplaces that depend on the knowledge and skills of their workers for success in the marketplace. Literacy is an essential component in Canada's economic prosperity:

- the International Adult Literacy Survey studied comparable literacy profiles across national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries. "The results demonstrated a strong plausible link between literacy and a country's economic potential" (Statistics Canada, 1996, p. 9)
- an examination of international economic figures makes it clear that a country's financial and social wellbeing can be directly and positively correlated with the level of literacy found in its general population. Higher income countries generally have lower adult illiteracy rates (Workers in an integrating world, 1995, p. 162; World Development Report, 1995)

Despite the critical need for a literate population, there is evidence that our literacy rate is troubling:

- data from 1995 reveal that 22 percent of Canadians 16 and over "have serious difficulty dealing with printed materials" and another 24 to 26 percent "can deal only with material that is simple and clearly laid out ... They read, but not well" (Statistics Canada, 1996, p. 2)
- some 38 percent of Canadians aged 16 to 69 "do not meet everyday reading demands"; a similar proportion "have not mastered the

skills needed to deal with everyday numeracy operations" (Economic Council of Canada, 1992, p. 8).

Low literacy skills lead to serious social and economic costs, since those who cannot read cannot participate fully in Canadian society or the workforce:

- "The cost of ... illiteracy to Canada's businesses is estimated to be over \$1.6 billion annually. Costs include accident and safety-related matters as well as in-house costs due to lost productivity, excessive supervisory time, poor product quality, difficulties in training illiterate workers or problems related to employee morale. Costs to business outside the workplace include loss of consumption in the marketplace because people cannot understand or gain access to information about a company's products. The cost to Canadian society as a whole is estimated to be up to \$10 billion or more annually" (Cultural Partnership Branch, 1996, p. 14).

A significant rate of low-literacy is a national problem that impairs Canada's ability to be an economically and socially healthy nation.

Public libraries play an active role in national efforts to increase the literacy skills of Canadians. They do this by supporting cradle-to-the-grave literacy through library collections, materials, programs and partnering efforts:

- The majority of libraries offer preschool story-time programs, school visits and summer reading clubs, all of which foster a love of reading, as studies have demonstrated that the earlier children are exposed to reading, the better their literacy skills are in later life.
- a joint Alpha Ontario and OLA study found that 75 percent of libraries collect print materials for new adult readers, 82 percent provide space for tutoring and 77 percent maintain information on literacy providers. (Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995, p. 15)
- libraries help to ensure that seniors, who may be housebound, have continued opportunities to read. An Ontario study found that all of the libraries surveyed had a home book-delivery service, all except one had deposit collections (mostly in segregated seniors' facilities and all had collections of large print books (Wilkinson and Allen, 1988, p. 7).

Public libraries, along with other educational organizations, provide a wealth of resources and services that advance the literacy skills of Canadians young and old:

- Cutbacks to public libraries “will lead to an increase in illiteracy which translates to a poor prognosis for Canadian culture” (Canadian Publishers’ Council, 1996, p. 1)
- Public libraries help to ensure Canadians form a “labour force capable of competing in a changing world ... a key step to economic growth and improvement of the human condition” (Statistics Canada, 1996, p. 1).

### Public libraries support children and students

There is an inextricable relationship between the formal education system in Canada and the informal lifelong-learning resources provided by public libraries. Public libraries in Canada offer students and children a wide array of resources including print, audiovisual and electronic materials; access to technology; and reading and preschool programs that serve to complement the resources made available to students in formal academic environments:

- a study of the largest urban public libraries across Canada found that in 1995 they spent over \$8 million on children’s materials. (CALUPL, *Annual Statistics*, 1995 (1996), p. 10)
- a province-wide survey of public libraries in British Columbia found that “70 percent of all libraries devote over 20 percent of the total budget to children’s materials” and that “over 90 percent of all libraries offer ... preschool story time and class visits” (Cobb, 1988, p. intro).

Canadians feel strongly that the public library’s role in educating children and students should be a top priority.

- a 1990 Ontario Studies in Education survey asked respondents to rank a list of seven educational and/or cultural institutions (excluding schools) in order of importance for students. Public libraries ranked first with 75 percent of respondents rating it “Very important” for students to experience before they leave elementary school (Ontario Public Library Services North, 1993, p. 9)

- research in Nova Scotia found that 29 percent of those surveyed felt the most important role for the public library was as a discovery and learning centre for children (Omnifacts, 1996, p. iii)
- Quebec research demonstrates that 70 percent of children surveyed used the public library to get materials for school assignments or to borrow books for recreational reading. (Elley, 1992, p. 81)
- national research from the USA echoes the Canadian public’s belief that libraries should be an integral part of the educational process. “Participants in a 1992 Gallup poll indicated the following as ‘very important’ roles for public libraries: Formal education support centre (90 percent) and Preschooler’s door to learning (82 percent)” (NRENAISSANCE Committee, 1994, p. 134).

Public support for the library’s contribution to learning is reflected in usership. Canadians make excellent use of the educational services that public libraries provide:

- at Nepean Public Library, 25 percent of patrons reported that the most common reason they used the library was for help with school work (Ekos Research Associates, 1990, p. 20)
- 27 percent of patrons at the North York Public Library use the library for school work (North York Public Library, 1995, p. 26)
- in Alberta, 32 percent of patrons use the library for research or school work, or for child related-activities (Calder Bateman, 1991, p. 33).

Investment in public libraries yields a high return in the educational health of students. Studies from around the world show that public library use is a positive factor in the attainment of high reading and comprehension levels:

- in an international study of children’s reading levels in 32 countries, one of the major findings was that “The availability of books is a key factor in reading literacy. The highest-scoring countries typically provide their students with greater access to books in the home, in nearby community (public) libraries and bookstores and in school” (Elley, 1992, p. xiii)
- Further statistical analysis of the Elley study reiterated the finding that more effective

schools tend to be set in communities “which feature ready access to books through the availability of a public library ...” (Postlethwaite and Ross, 1992, p. 42)

- a study in Slovenia found “A positive correlation between reading literacy and nearness to a public library ... those whose schools were very close to a public library scored higher ... than those who were 30-120 minutes away” (Novljan, 1993, p. 100)
- an analysis of fourth-grade reading comprehension tests in 41 American states and the public library’s average per capita circulation revealed a positive correlation. The research concluded that this finding “is consistent with the many previous studies showing that free reading is a consistent predictor of reading ability and that libraries are a major source of reading for children” (Krashen, 1995, p. 236).

In partnership with formal education systems, public libraries have a crucial role in ensuring that Canada has well-educated students ready to face the twenty-first century.

Well-educated students will ensure that Canada remains a successful and competitive country in the expanding global economy and into the next century.

### Public libraries support lifelong learning

Public libraries are a lifelong learning resource for all Canadians. It is essential in the new economy that people be informed and continually upgrade their work and life skills:

- “Lifelong learning is both an ideal and a future necessity ... In the very near future, rather than thinking of learning as an educational experience completed early in life, Canadians will view it as an enriching lifelong process vital to continuing employment and success” (Industry Canada, 1996, pp. 3 and 22)
- “The development of basic skills and lifelong learning is being promoted by many countries, in hopes of improving their economic health and the human condition of their citizens” (Statistics Canada, 1996, p. 9)
- “The need to know is not new, but the amount of information needed in today’s complex social and economic structures and

the power of that information to determine who will succeed is unprecedented” (Schuman, 1990, p. 183)

- “individuals can now expect three to four distinct career changes in their working life. This means that education will become a lifelong exercise rather than a discrete one which precedes entry to the labour force, as at present” (Lesser and Vagianos, 1988, p. 13).

### Public libraries help people to make informed personal decisions

The lifelong learning needs of users are not limited to the workplace dynamic. The library plays an essential role in providing for the information needs of people in search of answers to “real” life questions: health concerns, personal development and enrichment, family crisis and other pressing issues:

- a summary of studies conducted in over 30 public libraries found that patrons use the library 1.2 times per capita annually to solve day-to-day problems related to travel, shopping, etc; 1.1 times per capita annually to address a personal/family crisis; 1.6 times per capita annually to find information for self-help or hobbies (Griffiths and King, 1994, p. 86)
- in Kingston, Ontario, the public library has set up a consumer health service. In 1990 they answered close to 1,000 questions at InfoHealth (Defoe, 1991, p. 341)
- in one study, respondents were asked how the library helped them. Over 90 percent “Got support/emotional help”, 89 percent “Found directions/got skills/reached a goal”, 83 percent “Got ideas/understanding” and 72 percent “Got happiness/pleasure” (Dervin and Fraser, 1985, p. 11)
- Of those who visit the library for help with some personal or family crisis “30 percent of these visits are said to be absolutely required to address crises” (Griffith and King, 1994, p. 85)
- Library users stated in survey responses that the public library; “gave me the motivation to start”, “encouraged me to keep going with my research”, “gave me a sense of hope and purpose”, “helped me decide what appliance to buy”, “helped me not to make any

mistakes during my pregnancy”, “helped me to understand (my husband’s heart disease-related stay in hospital) more” (Dervin and Fraser, 1985, p. 11).

- “A strong general education, nourished by a healthy interest in reading and the ability to navigate through the complex world of information, continue to be necessary building-blocks for success. As we approach 1999 – just as in 1899 – libraries must be among the leaders providing that information” (Cultural Partnership Branch, 1996, p. 14).

### Public libraries are recognized by their users as lifelong learning centres

- “an impressive 92 percent of respondents thought public libraries are either very important or fairly important in furthering the education of adults after their formal schooling has been completed” (Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995, p. 15)
- when asked to select the most important role of a public library, 40 percent of Nova Scotians chose the role of educational support centre, while 20 percent chose a centre for research and reference (Omnifacts Research Limited, 1996, p. iii)
- a 1992 American Gallup poll stated that 83 percent felt it was very important for public libraries to be centres of independent learning (NRENAISSANCE Committee, 1994, p. 134).

User studies indicate that Canadians are taking advantage of public libraries’ learning resources, particularly non-fiction and reference materials and educational programs:

- at Lloydminster Public Library, 10.7 percent of users regularly borrow self-help and how-to material, while 10.3 percent use the library to consult reference materials (Lloydminster Public Library, 1994, p. 2)
- educators in Alberta have voiced their belief that “libraries are integral to the ongoing education of Albertans. They are lifelong learning centres” (Calder Bateman, 1991, p. 27).

Canadians are fortunate to have the public library as a lifelong learning centre. The public library offers Canadians resources and services that “aid the acquisition and improvement of

personal skills, competence and knowledge and fosters personal creativity, motivation, confidence and self-improvement” (Norton, 1991, p. 91) These are the skills Canadians will need to remain competitive in the economy of the twenty-first century.

### Public libraries and emerging technologies

Statistics show that currently only those people and businesses in the higher income brackets are able to afford the hardware, software and connectivity costs required to participate in the Information Highway. However, the need for access to the Internet is not limited to people and businesses with discretionary income, and it is here that libraries are well positioned to bridge the economic gap. From individuals who might not be able to afford computer technology at home to many small and home-based businesses, the public library can provide the necessary connections to help prevent the division of our society into information “haves” and “have nots”.

Statistics Canada reports that:

- in 1994 only 400,000 households (4 percent) had a fax machine, just 8 percent had a modem and only 25 percent of Canadians had a home computer (“Preparing for the Information Highway” *Focus on Culture* 8 (spring 1996), pp. 1/4)
- in 1994 “households in the highest income group were five times more likely to have a home computer (46 percent) than were those in the lowest income group (9 percent)” (“Preparing for the information highway” *Focus on Culture* 8 (spring 1996), pp. 1/4)
- “As the information highway grows more elaborate, the number of opportunities for taking advantage of information technology in the home is increasing. Thus far, however, these innovations are most accessible to people in the higher income households” (“Preparing for the information highway” *Focus on Culture* 8 (spring 1996), pp. 1/4)

### The public library ensures the information highway is accessible to all Canadians

- “Public libraries are located in almost every community in Canada, and are obvious



public access points to the information highway, and sources of information and training in its use" (Skrzeszewski, 1995, p. 5)

- "Unlike most sites for public access terminals (which range from government buildings, from shopping malls to laundromats), public libraries have trained staff available for consultation and training in the use of the library's resources, including electronic information resources" (NRENAISSANCE Committee, 1994, p. 137).

Bill Gates donated \$1 million so that Canadian public libraries can access the Internet and other multimedia resources. Gates stated:

Microsoft recognizes the significant contribution public libraries make to the education of Canadians ... The library is an ideal setting where people can use the full potential of computers and the Internet to conduct research, learn and communicate (Gates, Microsoft Expands Libraries Online! To Canada, July 26, 1996, bcla-list@unixq.ubc.ca).

### Canadians want the public library to provide electronic resources

- 69 percent of Ontarians say they "want educators and libraries to play a major role in shaping the Information Highway" (Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995, p.28)
- the top three new services requested are: computer software for loan, microcomputers for public use and access to online computer databases (Lloydminster Public Library, 1994, p. intro)
- when users were asked to prioritize services, "access to online information databases and/or Internet ranked highly at ... 84 percent" (Fraser Valley Regional Library, 1995, p. 8)
- 36 percent of public library patrons indicated that internet access and training is "very important" for the library to introduce and 31 percent think the lending of CDROMs is "very important" to introduce (North York Public Library, 1995, p. 39).

### Public libraries are integrating new and emerging technologies

- Canadian libraries spent over \$10 million on electronic and audiovisual materials in 1991

(Statistics Canada – Culture Statistics – Public Libraries, 1993, p. 54)

- a national study showed that public libraries recognize their potentially important role in providing electronic information: "The degree of automation and networking varies from province to province to territory. Yet, in each jurisdiction major planning and implementation processes are under way to automate library functions and to make them accessible electronically through networked access" (Skrzeszewski, 1995, p. 5).

The current fiscal situation makes the introduction of technology challenging:

- "Public libraries face the electronic networked environment without adequate equipment, staff, or policy and financial support" (McClure *et al.*, 1994, p. 4)
- in 1994, statistics collected about large urban public libraries did not include electronic resources as an expenditure item. In 1995 these libraries budgeted over \$1 million for electronic materials and the figure is projected to go up another half-million in 1996 (CALUPL Annual Statistics, 1996, p. 8)
- A national survey of libraries in the USA revealed that from the 1994/95 year to the 1995/96 year there was "an incredible 43 percent increase in technology-related expenses" (St Lifer *et al.*, 1996, p. 40).

### Access to the Internet is a crucial issue for Canadians

- "If the information highway becomes a primary distribution vehicle for culture, then affordable access to the highway must be assured for all Canadians ... If the dollar costs or the technical skills required are too high, there is a danger of creating technological 'haves' and 'have-nots' in society, consequently limiting access to culture" (Statistics Canada, Canada's Culture, Heritage and Identity, 1995, p. 37)
- Industry Canada reports that when market forces fail to provide access, "the government is prepared to step in to ensure affordable access to essential Information Highway services for all Canadians, regardless of their income or geographic location" (Industry Canada, 1996, p. 23)

- there are “societal benefits flowing from great participation by individuals and communities in electronic networks. Publicly accessible networks ... can revitalize greater democratic participation in public decision making, advance a variety of cultural and multicultural objectives by tailoring their services to the needs of specific audiences, and provide more efficient and economical community support mechanisms to individuals and organizations” (Information Highway Advisory Council, 1995, p. 6).

Research in Canada suggests that to initiate the link between libraries and the Internet is not a financial impossibility:

- “The two studies (on Internet connectivity) for New Brunswick and Ontario are the most complete and are based on careful analysis. New Brunswick estimates the start-up cost of full patron connectivity at \$1,556,083, while Ontario estimates this cost at \$27,950,000. By taking these costs and comparing them with the populations of New Brunswick and Ontario, this provides an average cost of \$2.53 per capita for providing Internet access for the residents of these two provinces” (Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995, p. 15).

It is certain that a lack of citizen access to the Internet and other emerging technologies will have costly economic and social repercussions. The availability of these technologies at public libraries, along with trained and experienced professionals to assist users, will help to prevent Canada from becoming divided between “information haves” and “information have-nots”. To be effective at work and school today requires skills, ability and knowledge of automation and technology far beyond the capabilities of most family budgets.

## Conclusion

Dividends from the investment in Canadian public libraries are outstanding. Public libraries provide their communities with many benefits, from traditional social and cultural values, to strong economic values.

Public libraries provide an environment that fosters literacy and a love for reading, supports

the local population in their need for information, and supports and enhances local businesses.

Public libraries demonstrate creativity and flexibility in the establishment of resource sharing partnerships and networking opportunities, from sharing books via interlibrary loan, to joint automation initiatives.

Public libraries support and promote the Canadian culture and retail sectors through the purchase of books, magazines, newspapers, videos, and cassettes – written, produced, printed, published, performed and sold by Canadians.

Public libraries provide the services and support that assist in the development of literate, informed, and enriched citizens, ready to take on the challenges of the new century.

The Book and Periodical Council encourages library managers and staff, library boards and town councils, publishers and retailers to use this document as a tool when advocating and planning for the continuation of strong library services through the provision of stable funding.

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